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'Spy Flight' Details Lacking

Flight in the plane are known—until the responsibility is let to cover the details of the flight, the "probable espionage" which the Eisenhower Administration maintains was made by an American plane over Soviet Russia—there can be no adequate appraisal of the episode's significance.

However, for the time being at least, the United States has managed to make itself appear ridiculous to the rest of the world by first denying, then admitting, that the plane was on an espionage mission when it was downed and its pilot was captured far inside Russian territory. The Eisenhower Administration's further admission that no one in Washington was aware of the flight and that it had not been determined who in our overseas personnel had ordered the aerial mission can only serve to surround the whole incident with an air of irresponsibility. Coming on the eve of the much-heralded "Summit" meeting between President Eisenhower and Premier Nikita Khrushchev of Russia, the incident has the effect of putting the President on the defensive.

Nor is there much satisfaction to be derived from the attempt of certain congressmen to excuse the flight on the grounds that all countries now engage in espionage as a common practice. True, this nation has seen a dozen successful prosecutions developed as a result of Soviet spying in the last ten years, but none of the cases has been on a par with the American flight into Russia.

Imagine what American reaction would have been if a Russian espionage plane had been downed in Missouri or Kansas!

The whole story is so fantastic that we are inclined to give at least some weight to the opinion of a former Central Intelligence Agency plans officer who said Monday he doubted Premier Khrushchev's explanation of how the plane was shot down. Lyle H. Munson, in a recorded interview in Philadelphia, said the incident suggests something other than the shooting down of a plane. Munson, head of a New York book firm, who had been a plans officer with the CIA for three years and also served in the OSS during World War II, said this airplane was presumably shot down from a height of 60,000 feet. But, Munson said, if that is true, we must assume that the plane fell 60,000 feet and if that were the case, the falling craft would have dug a tremendous hole in the ground or have been shattered. He said the Soviets never would have found the plane sufficiently intact so as to recover some of its contents such as photographic equipment. Munson said the Russian claim of having recovered such equipment under the conditions they described is "incredible."

There is also the possibility of a "leak" within the CIA, Munson said, and the Russians knew in advance of Powers' flight, the route and the time. Such leaks have occurred in CIA operations in the past, Munson said, and undoubtedly will occur in the future.

The United States' revelations in connection with the case have been sufficient only to constitute an indictment of the nation. We hope that when the full story is known, this country will stand absolved in the eyes of the world.

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